

# The Greener Economy –An Emerging Concept From Kerala Tourism

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## Abstract

Tourism has been a major social phenomenon of societies all over the world. It is driven by the natural urge of every human being for new experiences, and the desire to be both educated and entertained. The motivations for tourism also include religious and business interests; the spread of education has fostered a desire to know more about different parts of the globe. Tourism growth has the potential to deliver economic benefits to remote, rural or underdeveloped areas within countries, yet it appears that major proportions of these benefits accrue to firms located in the major gateway cities, with proportionately small benefits accruing to host regions outside these gateways. Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism has become a thriving global industry with the power to shape developing countries in both positive and negative ways. No doubt it has become the fourth largest industry in the global economy.

**Keywords:** green, tourism, sustainability

## Introduction

Within the new array of ‘green’ products and services, ecotourism claims to combine environmental responsibility with the generation of local economic benefits that will have both a development impact and serve as conservation incentives. Economic incentives are imperative for nature conservation, particularly in remote and ill-monitored regions where a weak presence of the state hinders the use of alternative tools of environmental regulation. The objective of sustainable tourism is to retain the economic and social advantages of tourism development while reducing or mitigating any undesirable impacts on the natural, historic, cultural, or social environment. This is achieved by balancing the needs of tourists with those of the destination.

Green tourism is defined as environmentally friendly tourism activities with various focuses and meanings. In a broad term, green tourism is about being an environmentally friendly tourist or providing environmentally friendly tourist services. The green tourism concept would be highly appealing to tourism enterprises and operators owing to increasing governmental pressure to improve environmental performance by adopting effective and tangible environmental management techniques. Furthermore, achievement and promotion of internationally recognized environmental awards would be instrumental to the tourism enterprises in marketing their services. As a result, many concerned and responsible parties put forward recommendations for green tourism products to regulate tourism’s negative impacts. This conceptual paper attempts to discuss green tourism concept, green tourism certification and its processes as well explain the comparative approaches of green tourism in a few countries. Towards the end, by this green labeling, the industry can legitimately open up new areas for the more discriminating and wider range of the market, and tourists or visitors can enjoy the holiday they want with a clear conscience.

## The importance of green growth strategies

The need to reframe growth is becoming increasingly important due to imbalances being created by the impacts of economic activity on environmental systems. Greening the growth path of an economy depends on policy and institutional settings, level of development, resource endowments and particular environmental pressure points. There is no “one-size-fits-all” prescription for implementing a green growth strategy. There are, however, common considerations that need to be applied in all settings. And in every case, good economic policy lies at the heart of any strategy for green growth and policy action requires looking across a very wide range of policies, not just explicitly “green”, or environmental, policies.

The central feature of a green growth framework is recognition of natural capital as a factor of production and its role in enhancing well-being. Green growth should be conceived as a strategic complement to existing priorities and areas for environmental and economic policy reform, and strategies should target areas where there is clear beneficial overlap between environmental and economic policy. They should focus on finding cost-effective ways of reducing environmental pressures, to begin the transition towards new patterns of growth that will avoid crossing critical environmental thresholds.

Perceived trade-offs between economic growth and environmental protection are reduced when new measures that better capture well-being are used alongside GDP to measure progress, including the quality and composition of growth, and how this affects people's wealth and welfare. In this and many other respects, green growth is an essential component of sustainable development. The emergence of tourism as a major industry is one of the most remarkable changes that have taken place in the global economic activity (Sinclair, 1998). Tourism is the third largest economic activity in the world (after oil and automobiles), and it is one of the fastest-growing activities (Batta, 2009). The World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2008) projects that by the year 2010, international tourist arrivals will have increased to 1.018 billion and a direct receipt is expected to US\$1.55 trillion. Receipts from tourism make an important contribution to the economies of the developing countries in terms of income, employment, and balance of payments effects. Because of this, many developing countries have begun to actively pursue tourism as a means to create jobs, diversify their economies, and earn foreign currency.

Among the three major impacts of tourism—economic, socio-cultural and environmental—the economic impact played a dominant role in policy-making (Sinclair, 1998). With the focus on the economic benefits that accompanied the development of tourism, the adverse socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism were relatively ignored. Based on the economic benefits, tourism development was prescribed as a panacea for many social and economic problems. This led to the indiscriminate and unplanned growth of tourism infrastructure in many countries, and soon the negative effects in the form of social and environmental degradation began to emerge. Due to enhanced awareness of the negative impact of tourism on the environment, efforts have been made to develop approaches for making tourism sustainable. The last two decades have witnessed a growing interest in the relationship between tourism development and environmental quality (Erdogan and Tosun, 2009), with the emergence of special interest tourism including green tourism.

### **Tourism in Kerala**

Tourism is one of the few sectors where Kerala has clear competitive advantages given its diverse geography in a short space ranging from the Western Ghats covered with dense forests to the backwaters to the Arabian sea. Its ancient rich culture including traditional dance forms and the strong presence of alternative systems of medicine add to its allure. Unfortunately, Kerala is dominated by domestic tourism within the state although foreign tourists arrivals to the state has been growing at a faster rate than national average. The goal in the KPP 2030 is to develop Kerala as an up-market tourism destination with the state being the top destination in terms of number of tourists and revenue among all the Indian states. Sustainable tourism is the mission. This can be achieved by integrating tourism with other parts of the economy like medical and health hubs which will attract more stable tourists over a longer period of time and with higher spending capacity. There will be new elements added to leisure tourism and niche products in tourism will be developed. Infrastructure development is crucial to achieve this goal. The success of Kerala tourism will be based on the synergy between private and public sectors. The government has taken steps to encourage private investment in tourism, while adhering to the principles and practices of sustainability. Industry led sustainable tourism development relies upon the government- imposed and self- imposed regulations. Tourism in Kerala will be benchmarked against international indicators and monitored on a regular basis to achieve quality. Kerala lies on the southwest coast of the Indian Peninsula, stretching 360 miles along Malabar Coast and has been noted as the paradise of tourism. Kerala is a prime high-end tourism in the Indian subcontinent and has been rated as “one of the fifty destinations to be visited in one's lifetime

**Table No.1****Trends in domestic & Foreign tourist arrivals into Kerala**

year	Domestic Tourists	% var.	Foreign Tourists	% var.
2003	58,71,228	5.4	2,94,621	26.7
2004	59,72,182	1.7	3,45,546	17.3
2005	59,46,423	-4.3	3,46,499	0.27
2006	62,71,724	5.47	4,28,534	23.7
2007	66,42,941	5.92	5,15,808	20.37
2008	75,91,250	14.28	5,98,929	16.11
2009	79,13,537	4.25	5,57,258	-6.96
2010	85,95,075	8.61	6,59,265	18.31
2011	93,81,455	9.15	7,32,985	11.18
2012	100,76,854	7.41	7,93,696	8.28
2013	108,57,811	7.75	8,58,143	8.12

**Source:** Tourism statistics-2013, Department of Tourism Development

The State of Kerala in India is considered as a 'tourists' paradise'. As many as seventy five tourism products are found in the length and breadth of the State. Tourism in Kerala is really non-seasonal in nature. The flagship of tourism industry in Kerala is Department of Tourism (DoT), Government Kerala. The budgetary allocation for the department for 2002-2003 is Rs. 50 Crore. Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), Bakel Resorts Development Corporation (BRDC), Tourist Resorts (Kerala) Ltd. (TRKL), District Tourism Promotion Councils (DTPCs), Kerala Institute of Travel and Tourism Management Studies (KITTS), Kerala Institute of Hospitality Management Studies (KIHMS), Thenmala Eco-Tourism Development Agency, and a host of government departments such as Forests and Wildlife, Irrigation, Museum, Zoo and Archaeology are the other important state sponsored institutions which play key role in the tourism sector of Kerala. Considering the vast and varied potential of tourism in the state and its impact on the economic, social and cultural environment of the state, a detailed study is found to be relevant and imperative.

Besides, there are a number of agencies working in the semi-government and private sector for promotion of tourism in Kerala. So, in-depth studies are necessary to ascertain whether the optimum management potential is made use of by the above units. Moreover, based on the above study, the strategic management principles and methods to be adopted by the tourism industry in Kerala can also be worked out for implementation in the years to come. This study has been made to analyse the problems and prospects of tourism in Kerala and to manage Tourism effectively by employing new management strategies. Being, a green state with favourable climate, and natural surroundings, Kerala can make rapid strides in the tourism sector. The study covers the views expressed by various informants representing government, semi-government, private institutions and that of tourists.

**Table 2**

**INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVALS IN WORLD AND INDIA, 2001-2013**

YEAR	WORLD		INDIA		PERCENTAGE SHARE OF INDIA in World	RANK OF INDIA
	NUMBER IN MILLION	% CHANGE	NUMBER IN MILLION	% CHANGE		
2001	683.4	0.2	2.54	-4.2	0.37	51
2002	703.2	2.9	2.38	-6.0	0.34	54
2003	691.0	-1.7	2.73	14.3	0.39	51
2004	762.0	10.3	3.46	26.8	0.45	44
2005	803.4	5.4	3.92	13.3	0.49	43
2006	846.0	5.3	4.45	13.5	0.53	44
2007	894.0	5.7	5.08	14.3	0.57	41
2008	917.0	2.6	5.28	4.0	0.58	41
2009	883.0	-3.8	5.17	-2.2	0.59	41
2010	948.0	6.68	5.78	11.8	0.61	42
2011	995.0	4.72	6.31	9.2	0.63	38
2012	1035.0	3.86	6.58	4.3	0.64	41
2013	1087.0 (P)	4.78	6.97	5.9	0.64	42

Source: World Tourism Organization and Bureau of Immigration, India, p.16. and [www.tourism.gov.in](http://www.tourism.gov.in), [www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org).p.4.

P: Provisional

**Table 3**  
**Comparison of FTA & FEE – India and Kerala (2001-2013)**

Year	Foreign Tourist arrivals to India	Foreign Tourist arrivals to Kerala	% of Foreign Tourist Arrivals to India . (Annual Growth %)	% of Foreign Tourist Arrivals to Kerala (VAR)	Foreign Exchange Earnings in tourism - India (Rs. in Crores)	Foreign Exchange Earnings in tourism- Kerala (Rs. in Crores)	Percentage change % India	Percentage increase of Kerala	Domestic Tourist arrivals Kerala	Percentage change Kerala
2001	2537282	208830	-4.2	8.23	15083	535	-3.5	1.85	5239692	4.52
2002	2384364	232564	-6.0	11.3	15064	705.67	-0.1	31.90	5568256	6.3
2003	2726214	294621	14.3	26.7	20729	983.37	37.6	39.35	5871228	5.4
2004	3457477	345546	26.8	17.3	27944	1266.77	34.8	28.82	5972182	1.73
2005	3918610	346499	13.3	0.27	33123	1522.31	18.5	22.54	5946423	-4.33
2006	4447167	428534	13.5	23.7	39025	1988.40	17.8	28.09	6271724	5.47
2007	5081564	515808	14.3	20.37	44360	2640.94	13.7	32.82	6642941	5.92
2008	5282603	598929	4.0	16.11	51294	3066.52	15.6	16.11	7591250	14.28
2009	5167699	575258	-2.2	-6.96	54960	2853.16	4.7	-6.96	7913537	4.25
2010	5775692	659265	11.8	18.31	64889	3797.37	20.8	33.09	8595075	8.61
2011	6309222	732985	9.2	11.18	77591	4221.99	19.6	11.18	9381455	9.15
2012	6577745	793696	4.3	8.28	94487	4571.69	21.8	8.28	10076854	7.41
2013	6967601	858143	5.9	8.12	107671	5560.77	14.0	21.63	10857811	7.75

**Source:** Compiled from various sources. Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala.p.5 and Bureau of Immigration, India.

#### **Green tourism concept**

The concept of a green product is one that is easier to use than to define. Green tourism is used to indicate environmentally friendly tourism but have different focuses and meanings. Often such claims use terms which

lack of accepted or standard definitions, or utilize extravagant language to wash the emptiness of the claim being made (NCC, 1996). These terms are used for two purposes: first, to tell customers that the holiday destination they are going to is beautiful and unspoilt. Green tourism or another term related to environmental concern is mostly used to label nature holidays to exotic destinations (Wight, 1994). Second, green tourism claims can be used to signal that tourism operations taking place in that area do not harm the environment (Font and Tribe, 2001).

In loose terms, a product or service can be said to be green when it is beneficial to the producer and consumer without harming the environment. The difficulty starts when a stakeholder attempts to measure the negative effects of their activities on the environment. Even in cases where measurement seems possible, the next difficulty arises at agreeing the criteria to be considered and the threshold levels of unacceptable effects. Tourism traditionally has been considered a relatively green industry, with the exception of its transport and land development implications, and for this reason it has only recently become an area of concern (Font and Tribe, 2001).

TABLE 4. GREEN TOURISM CERTIFICATION BENEFITS

Agent	Benefits
Governments	<p>Certification helps governments protect their market niches as sustainable tourism destinations, especially when the credibility of the destination is threatened by green washing.</p> <p>Certification raises industry standards for health, safety, the environment, and social stability.</p> <p>By requiring economic benefits to communities, certification can help reduce poverty, especially in rural areas.</p> <p>Certification lowers the regulatory costs of environmental protection.</p>
Environment and local communities	<p>Certification of sustainable protects both the environment and the social and economic structure of local communities near the certified businesses.</p> <p>Certification requires the businesses to protect the environment and do little or no damage to it.</p> <p>Certification requires businesses to respect local culture and provide real economic and social benefits for it.</p> <p>When the business is economically sustainable, it is likely to continue offering high-quality service and benefits to the community for the long term.</p>
Businesses	<p>Certification helps businesses to improve their knowledge about elements of sustainability in their operations and focus their attention on the changes needed in their businesses. A well-operated business tends to be more efficient and to attract more clients.</p> <p>Certification tends to reduce operating costs. This has been found in almost every type of business certification. In tourism, it has been shown to dramatically reduce the costs of water, electricity, and fossil fuels, without reducing the quality of service.</p> <p>The process of implementing certification of sustainable tourism is often accompanied by easier access to technical assistance and financing for businesses to implement new technology. The business is educated about these technologies, for which donors and financial institutions offer low cost financing.</p> <p>Potentially, certification can provide a marketing advantage to certified businesses, as consumers learn to recognize credible certification brands.</p>
Consumers	<p>Certification provides tourists with environmentally and socially responsible choices. It helps consumers to know which businesses are truly socially and environmentally responsible and to make choices on this basis. As certification programs become better known, this may produce tangible benefits for a business's reputation and popularity.</p> <p>Certification in general increases public awareness of responsible business practices. It can alert tourists to the environmental and social issues in an area, allowing them to act more respectfully or contribute to solutions.</p> <p>Certified businesses tend to offer higher-quality service.</p>

Source: Adapted from Batta, 2009

Tourism industry stakeholders may consider the implementation of green tourism certification as a viable option to control tourism's direct negative (environmental) impacts on the natural resource base of host destinations. In practice, a tourism enterprise seeking a certification is required to meet specified standards and fixed criteria identified by the third-party environmental accreditation scheme offering the certificate (Mihalic, 2000). The procedures in green tourism certification may be broadly classified into six central steps, as shown below in Figure 1



### The case for investing in the greening of tourism

Tourism in general drives significant investment. However, even small increases in investments designed to achieve a greener sector, result in very significant increases in investment flows. Examples of positive outcomes linked to investing in the move towards more sustainable tourism include, job creation, where additional employment in energy, water, and waste services, and expanded local hiring and sourcing are expected from the greening of mainstream tourism segments.

In addition, tourism's role as an effective driver of local economic development is widely recognised. Furthermore, there is growing evidence that sustainable tourism can increase both the local contribution and multiplier effect, in line with local community involvement in the tourism value chain, through the supply of products, labour, tourism services and, increasingly, "Green services". When tourism-related income grows with a substantial reorientation in favour of the poor, poverty can be reduced. Local industry, for example, can help by engaging in and encouraging the use of local companies for the provision of transport, services and food in order to generate local income and employment multipliers and contribute to alleviate local poverty. However, as with income effects, there is increasing evidence that more sustainable tourism, particularly in rural areas, can lead to more positive poverty-reducing effects. With growing awareness of the need and value of conserving unique natural, social and cultural assets of destinations, there is increasing motivation from both the private and public sectors to invest in making tourism more sustainable. Investment in sustainable tourism offers both environmental benefits and opportunities to generate significant returns, notably in the areas of

**Energy** – In hotels and other accommodation there is considerable scope for investment in energy-efficient features and services. These include improvements to refrigeration, television and video systems, air conditioning and heating, and laundry. Such investments are often driven by rising energy costs; likely carbon surcharges; increasing expectations of customers; technological advances with low-carbon technology; and in some cases, government incentives.

**Water** – Internal water efficiency and management programmes, and investments in water-saving technology in rooms, facilities and attractions reduce costs. Greater efficiency and improved management allows for the increase of number of rooms/visitors in water-constrained destinations. Investments in water-saving systems, grey water reuse and rainwater collection and management systems can help reduce the volume of water consumption by approximately one quarter per guest per night (Fortuny, et al. 2008).

**Waste** – Lower levels of waste generation improves financial return for private sector actors, while better management of that same waste creates opportunities for jobs, and enhances the attractiveness of destinations.



**Biodiversity** – Guest expectations that tour operators should respect and protect the natural resource base from which they benefit, are increasingly driving changes in the tourist industry. Policies of mainstream tourism are likely to change towards more effective conservation of sensitive ecosystems, driven by growing market demand and large operator programmes. Conservation and restoration provides a highly profitable, low-cost investment for maintaining ecosystem services.

Cultural heritage includes living cultures, mainstream and minority, as well as historical, religious, and archaeological sites. Investment to maintain cultural authenticity, can offer opportunities for continuation, rejuvenation or enhancement of traditions and way of life, resulting in a more sustainable tourism offer. In addition, most commentators believe that investment in cultural heritage is among the most significant, and usually profitable, investments a society, or tourism sector, can make.

The need to reframe growth is becoming increasingly important due to imbalances created by the unsustainable impacts of economic activity on environmental systems. Green growth is about fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies and is an essential component of sustainable development.

Promoting a successful transition towards green growth means: *i*) developing strategies for reform; *ii*) facilitating adjustment in the labour market; *iii*) accounting for concerns about distributional impacts on firms and households, especially those on low incomes; and *iv*) promoting international co-operation.

## Conclusion

The dream for a Green Economy would be an asset to the total well being. A green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in income and employment should be driven by investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Tourism is one of the most promising drivers of growth for the world economy and key to driving the defining trends of the transition to a green economy. With tourism's close connections to numerous sectors at destination and international levels, even small improvements toward greater sustainability will have important impacts. Like many other sectors, tourism faces a range of significant sustainability-related challenges. In the modern era of growth and development the strategy adopted by us is to ruin the nature not protect it. The nature without green is like a desert and nobody will be happy there even if can see a lot of concrete topmost buildings.

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